



ONLINE PROGRAM INCREASES STEWARDSHIP OF INLAND LAKES

OVER 1,850 PARTICIPANTS

from 75 Michigan counties and 35 states participated in the program.

89 PERCENT

will use information gained in the course in local lake management efforts.

PRIORITY

A R E A S

The Introduction to Lakes Online course:

- Shares science-based information on lake ecology, watersheds, natural shorelines, aquatic plants, water law and community engagement.
- Encourages the protection and restoration of Michigan's 11,000 inland lakes.
- Fosters a conservation ethic among property owners and community leaders.
- Builds a peer-to-peer network.
- Promotes the use of environmentally friendly landscaping at the water's edge.

“This course taught me ways average people like myself can get involved in lake management. It’s empowering to know that my lack of background in limnology doesn’t have to hold me back as an advocate for conservation efforts.”

IMPACTS

Michigan's 11,000 inland lakes are complex ecosystems, and communities often struggle to protect and manage them in a way that incorporates the best available knowledge and resources. Taught by Michigan State University (MSU) Extension educators, MSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife faculty, and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy staff, the Introduction to Lakes Online course equips residents, decision-makers and local leaders to address management concerns by increasing lake literacy and creating peer and resource connections. The course has six topical units, which include video lectures, discussion forums, exploratory activities, quizzes and additional resources. MSU Extension also hosts three live Ask-an-Expert webinars with MSU Extension and state agency staff. Introduction to Lakes Online, offered annually, is taught over an eight-week period with each unit opening weekly. On average, 86% of participants complete all units of the course and receive a certificate of completion. After taking the course, many participants indicate their plans to implement best management practices on their property and in their communities.

Since it launched in 2015:



1,053

lakefront property owners participated in the class.



187

government officials participated in the class.



97%

will turn to MSU Extension for lake resources in the future.



72%

noted this was their first experience with an MSU Extension program.



97%

increased their awareness of lake management techniques.

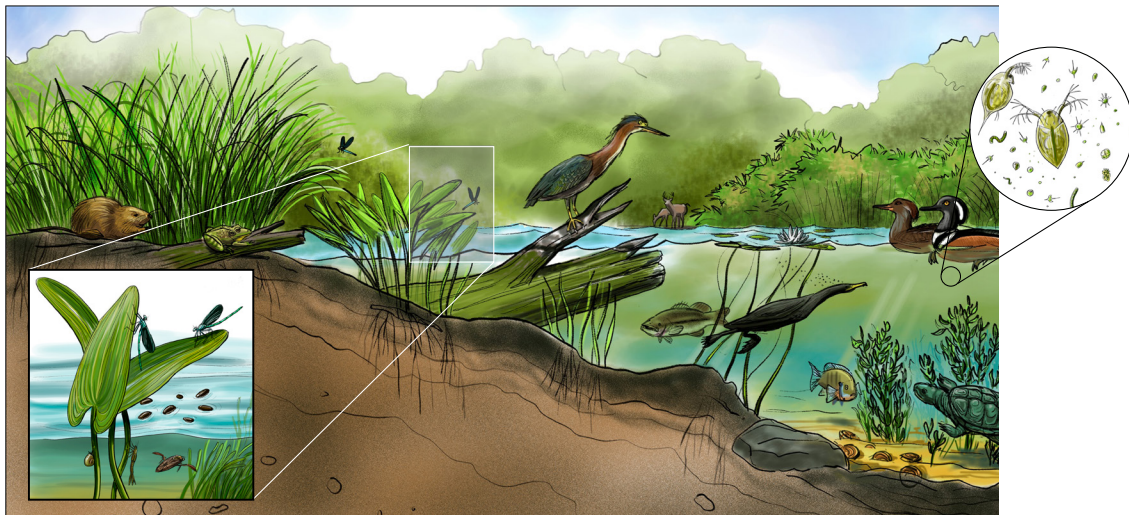


COURSE OUTLINE

Introduction to Lakes Online is divided into six distinct units with a focus on inland lake ecology, management and protection.

INTRODUCTION TO LAKES ONLINE

UNIT NAME	SUMMARY
Lake Ecology	An introduction to lake ecosystems and the exploration of basic lake functions
Lakes and Their Watersheds	Primer on the water cycle, hydrologic features of a watershed and land use impacts to lake water quality
Lakes and Their Shorelines	Review of shoreline features and functions in inland lake ecosystems and best practices to protect water quality and lake habitat
Introduction to Aquatic Plants	Introduction to plant identification, short and long-term management techniques, and Michigan regulations regarding aquatic vegetation
Lakes and Water Law	Summary of federal, state and local laws regarding riparian rights, navigability and permitting on inland lakes in Michigan
Community Involvement	Review of institutions involved in lake management, coordination with other lake groups and components of a lake management plan



This is an example of one of the many illustrations found in the Introduction to Lakes course. It shows various wildlife and other biota commonly found in inland lakes and is used to explain the dynamics of lake ecosystems in the Lake Ecology unit. Illustrations and other graphics are used throughout the class to explain complex scientific processes. Illustration by Bruce Kerr.

“My favorite part of the course was the willingness of staff to interact with us online and help with problems and information. This group has a lot of passion for ecology and our lakes, as do we. The last year has shown me that a lot of online education has been lacking this type of interaction. Your program excelled at it.”